7: Thompson--379 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
595

"The Laotians find the indissolubility and relative asceticism of a Christian marriage far less congenial than their traditional polyandry and polygamy."

10: d'Orleans--299 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, ~~595~~, 643

"The native Government acts under the control of the Commissioner. [LSS: the Siamese Commissioner] At the head of it are two kings, one for peace and the other for war, who reign in concert. The royalty is hereditary, and, owing to the existence of polygamy, the royal family is a numerous one and is related to all the families in the city. The two reigning kings (1) bear the names of Chao Kham Souck and Chao

1. According to Hallett (p. 32), the kings of Luang Prabang, like those of Lahon, Lapoon, Peh, and Tern, have only the title of Chao Huang (great prince), while those of Xieng Mai and Nau are Chou Che Wit (lord of life). The former are only entitled to kill criminals by piercing their breasts with a lance, while the latter are said to have the right to behead them.

Boune Khong (now called by the Siamese Chao Ratchapha Khinai). Their father Chao Boune Kham, after a reign of twenty years, abdicated, and he has now become, at the age of eighty-two, a sacred personage and more or less of a demi-god."

643* could not tolerate the Thai alliance without giving up the prestige of
648* his victories of 1555. By 1563 he had judged that the rapid recovery of
726 the Siamese was a threat to his power, and when the rains ceased in
175* November he assembled his army, penetrated into Xieng-Mai territory, forced the king of Ayuthya to abdicate, led him away in captivity and sent his lieutenants against Lan-Xang. One of these was the Siamese prince Sang-Kao, a traitor to his country. Setthathirath put two armies into the field which took the offensive and at first gained several victories -- one at Pak-Houi where Sang-Kao was crushed and one at Muong-Kem, but they then had to fall back before the Burmese horde which swept up to the walls of Vientiane. The Burmese generals deliberated too long over the best means of capturing the city, and when they did decide to act it was too late, for Settathirath had disappeared. The capital was seized and the Oupahat (1)

1. Neither the Annals of Lan-Xang nor those of Xieng-Mai enable us to identify the Oupahat or second king who was left at Vientiane by Setthathirath. This gap is all the more surprising in that this first dignitary of the court was to reign ten years later. The Laotian chronicles indicate only that he was Setthathirath's brother-in-law, and continue to designate him by his title of Oupahat even during the period of his reign. His merit as a sovereign was, moreover, somewhat questionable, as may be seen in what follows, and it may be that the first writers of the Annals kept silent intentionally about a prince who was imposed by Burma and who was regarded by many as a usurper. All kinds of suppositions are possible. Perhaps he was one of the two younger brothers of Setthathirath who tried to accomplish the schism of 1547 and who are not once mentioned in the Annals after the unity of the kingdom was restored in 1548.

was captured together with three of the /87/ king's wives, (1) their

1. Setthathirath had allied himself by marriage with most of the neighboring kings -- Xieng-Mai, Annam, Ayuthya. He had also married daughters of several vassals.

/595/

daughters and some twenty concubines, but after a week's rest the Burmese had to go in pursuit of the Laotian army. They caught up with it after two day's march and defeated it after a bloody combat

669 175* royal troops succeeded in dispersing the partisans of Intha-Som and forced them, after a bloody encounter, to retreat in disorder along the Nam-Ou. Ong-Ek swam across the river and fled to Phoutong-Nongboua. As for Intha-Som, he was able to gain the Sip-Song-Panas where he kept a close watch on events and waited for a more favorable opportunity.

Finally free to organize his conquest, King-Kitsarath endeavored to restore some measure of order in the kingdom, which was greatly in need thereof. Aided by his cousin Khamone-Noi (1), he succeeded

1. See p. 133.

within a few years in restoring tranquillity to his subjects. Luang-
/633/ Prabang, once again a royal metropolis, was slowly repopulated and resumed the foremost place in a diminished State.

633 175* 133 Gracefully stretching across the junction of the Mekong and the Nam-Khane and dominated by the verdant hill of the "Phou-Si," the city regained some of its animation and gradually became covered /181/ with new buildings grouped around the ancient pagodas which recalled the past grandeur of the legendary Muong-Swa.

"Moreover, the configuration of the principality's territory and the particular topography of the region combined at this river junction to provide all the elements for the prosperity of a great city. Luang-Prabang is in fact contained in the immediate zone where the region's three great navigable watercourses converge on the Mekong. These watercourses (Nam-Ou, Nam-Suong, Nam-Khane) have in the past favored the political centralization of the country as well as trade relations with China, Tonkin and Annam. Whereas both upstream and downstream for a distance of several hundred kilometers the banks of the river are constantly cut deep between the mountains and nowhere offer a surface of flat land which would lend itself to large agglomerations, here nature has provided on both banks a broad extent of land which can be cultivated as ricefields and is capable of supplying all the needs of a large population" (1).

1. Cf. Captain Cupet, Mission Pavie, Vol. III /Voyages au Laos et chez les sauvages du Sud-Est de l'Indochine (1900)/, p. 34.

643* 595 175* At his death, which occurred about 1726, King-Kitsarath left three daughters born of three different wives /182/ /Page 182 is

devoted to an illustration: "Junction of the Nam-Khane and the 643*
Mekong at Luang-Prabang." --Translator/ /183/ whom he had 595
chosen in Luang-Prabang itself from the families of his mandarins. 175*

KHAMONE-NOI, KING 1726-1727.

Khamone-Noi succeeded him and took as wives two of the dead /595/
king's daughters, Thene-Sao and Thene-Kham. But Intha-Som at 175*
once began to agitate. Not daring to hope that the family of the 669
Sip-Song-Panas would lend him aid against one of its children, he 643*
addressed himself to some newcomers to the land who had been 563
infiltrating for some time into the valley of the Nam-Ou. These /167/
were the "Mousseux," mountainfolk driven out of Yunnan by the
religious wars (1). Although their temperament was not at all war-

1. Violent Moslem rebellions were then devastating southern China.

like, these fugitives nevertheless agreed, since they had no choice, 721
to lend their aid to Intha-Som. In return the latter promised their 643*
leaders La-Nga and Noli that he would recognize and confirm their 175*
occupation of Muong-Yo and Boun-Neua as soon as he became king. 669
563

Submission of Intha-Som (1726). But the Mousseux (2), al-

2. The word "Mousseux" is the word which most nearly approaches the native appellation. With their slender figures, their rather white coloration, their prominent cheekbones and their well-shaped and not flattened noses, the "Mousseux" type has a greater affinity with the Indo-European type than with the yellow race type. /142/

though they were supported by Nha-No- '184/ Muong of Muong-La, failed in their march on Luang-Prabang and Intha-Som had no other recourse than to make his submission. He gave up his weapons, took an oath of obedience and fidelity in the pagoda of Xieng-Thong, and was given permission to live in the capital, where he settled near the Vat-Visoun with a large retinue of Mousseux.

He was quite determined not to keep his word. The king, moreover, was not at all worried and did not even have him watched.

149: Reinach--147 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

595
554

Polygamy. Although polygamy is not the rule in Laos, it is sanctioned by custom, and the only limits as to the number of wives one man may possess are the extent of his resources and his personal taste for becoming the husband of a greater or lesser number of wives.

Since infertile unions are regarded as a punishment of [194] heaven, and since physiological defects are beyond the comprehension of the Laotians, a husband who has no children has two courses between which he can choose:

[586]

1. To repudiate his sterile wife. He must then leave her all their property gains since their marriage and half of their common property;

2. To keep this wife and take a second one.

Recourse is preferably had to the last solution in most cases. By acting thus the husband avoids making restitutions which would often be difficult for him. Moreover, his first wife often persuades him to take a second wife who will be under her orders and almost become her slave.

This is what does happen if the husband has enough money for several wives. They are all under the domination of the first, never sit at the same rank as she and may not wear jewels or clothes which are as rich and sumptuous as hers. They are, in a way, legal concubines.

These secondary wives are ranked in accordance with their date of entry into the polygamous household and are designated as the first wife, second wife, third wife, fourth wife, etc. In the house, except for the times when the husband or master keeps them with him, they are employed as servants for all the household tasks, farming, spinning cotton, weaving cloth, etc.

In the case the first wife should die, and according to the will of the husband, the second wife takes her place and the others advance one notch.

438
595
485

There is also another very curious type of polygamy which is encouraged by the nomadic habits of the Laotian traveler or trader and which, "utile dulci," yields him profit, security and pleasure. Some natives are, in fact, married at several different places, often quite far from one another and generally situated at the spots where periodic markets are held.

The advantages of this type of polygamy--from the Laotian point of view, of course--are that the husband can have an associate

438
595
485 in each center who will represent him, handle business in his absence, collect at leisure the stock of trading merchandise needed for the next [195] trip, and also provide a home for him where he is sure to find a smiling face and a warm welcome in the course of his wanderings.

554
595 Among the nobility and the so-called princely families polygamy is the rule and is almost obligatory for the sake of prestige, which demands a greater or lesser number of concubines depending on the husband's rank. It may sometimes happen, for various reasons, that there are two wives whose progeniture enjoy a higher rank and inherit the titles and duties of the father. It also happens, in this social milieu, that the first wife or wives will see that their husband is growing old, worn out and morose, and will seek to distract him during his last years by making him marry quite young girls for whom he is more of a father than a husband but who give him the illusion of rejuvenation and bring joy and gaiety into the house with the light of their youth (1).

(1) Thanks to the docile character of Laotian women in general, and also to the atavistic imprint of custom which makes them regard polygamy as an entirely natural status, peace and harmony are rarely troubled in such households. A hierarchy naturally arises among the various wives and concubines. Each of them remains in the place assigned to her by the date of her entry into the household and enjoys any special favors which may be conferred on her by their common husband without arousing any jealousy.

Quarrels between wives are so rare that when one does by chance occur the corporal punishments decreed by ancient custom are unhesitatingly applied. The situation is of such a nature as to preserve among Laotian wives a spirit of conciliation and amiability which is not the least of their charms.

832
834 Kissing. Punishment for amatory offenses. Like most of the peoples of the Far East, the Laotians do not indulge in kissing, at least not in the European manner. They rub their noses against the skin of their children or wives and sniff more or less noisily.

Although the morals of the Laotians seem excessively free to us and their remarks, songs and gestures often border on what we would describe as obscenity, we should not conclude that the Laotians are deliberately lewd or cynical. They are instinctively careful to be

Kha

291 Men's clothing consists of a jacket and pair of trousers which have the same shape as those of the Lus and are made of coarse cotton cloth manufactured locally. Their headgear is a turban cut from a piece of Turkey-red cotton.

For work, clothing is generally reduced to a narrow strip of cloth forming a belt, one of the ends of which is passed between the legs and fastened in the middle of the back.

During the cold season a jacket is added to this loin-cloth.

The women wear a skirt of the Laotian type which is fastened under the armpits so that it does not come down below the calves of the legs. A short jacket completes their costume. On their head they wear a turban which is generally dark in color. [Illustration alongside text here]

301 Jewelry. Both sexes have silver or copper jewelry such as wide stiff neckbands, bracelets, rings, buttons, clasps, etc. Like the Lus and the Youns, the Khas pierce the lobes of their ears. Often the holes are of such dimensions that a roll of leaves or a bouquet of flowers can be inserted in them.

262 Food. Their diet is very like that of the Laotians and Thais. When there is a shortage of rice its place is taken, until the following harvest, by yams, taros, bamboo sprouts, banana flowers, etc.

462 Occupations. Women and children are given the hardest tasks imaginable, and it is unusual to meet them without baskets on their backs. The men carry only their bag, their sword, their rifle and their pipe.

•595 Marriage. Divorce. Adultery. Polygamy is widespread among the Khas, and the number of wives a man possesses is the sign of his wealth. For, regarded as they are rather like beasts of burden and working constantly, the more numerous these wives are the more they will produce.

584 [254] The rules for marriage preliminaries closely resemble the Laotian customs and the ceremony itself, although much less splendid, comprises the same rites. To be sure, the role of the bonzes is filled here by "Pho-Tao," that is to say elders or sorcerers.

586 Divorce may be requested by the wife, or one of the wives, for personal reasons. It may also take place by mutual consent. Finally,
684 it is compulsory in the case of adultery, since the guilty woman must marry her accomplice.

Contrary to what is the case elsewhere, adultery on the part of the husband is punished by a double fine awarded to his wife's family

Hill Tribes

595 There is polygamy among the Meos, and the Meo women do not enjoy any higher regard than the Kha women.

[101] The Yaos. The Yaos have the same origin as the Meos, and are strikingly like them in many respects. Their mores, their beliefs and their habits are identical.

619 As we have seen above, the Yaos are divided into three varieties, these being the Lantenes, the Khao and the Ao-Tchaine.

291 The Lantenes (blacks) wear broad trousers, a long smock buttoning
302 at the side and a turban, all made of black cottonstuff. They wear their hair long and either wound under a turban or braided in Chinese style.

[342] Their houses are like those of the Meos and shelter several families, each of which has its own quarters. They are generally clean and well kept-up.

593 The mores of the Lantene Yaos are patriarchal, and these folk
562 are monogamous. The women are very reserved and do not let themselves be seen much by strangers. They enjoy a certain respect and are treated with consideration by their husbands.

231 The Lantenes are great livestock breeders, and cultivate the opium
241 poppy in addition to rice and maize. They are skilled hunters of wild animals, and each man owns a rifle from which he is rarely separated.

224 Besides a dialect peculiar to them, they speak Quoan-hoa (a
[212] Cantonese idiom), and many of them can write Chinese characters.
[198] The Khao Yaos are less outgoing than their fellows and do not
101 greet strangers with as much good will.

The men's clothing is like that of the Lantenes, [269] but the
271 women are garbed in a different manner and wear their hair in a special way which has earned their tribe the name "Khao" (horns).

Over a pair of black trousers ornamented with colored embroidery and held in place by leggings, Khao Yao women wear a tunic which comes down to the knees but the flaps of which are fastened to the belt. This tunic also has colored embroidery on the chest, back, neck and cuffs, and is held shut with wide silver hooks.

302 Their hairdress consists of a coil which is smeared with wax and lacquer to hold it in place and in which a wooden socket is imbedded. A light bamboo framework is inserted into the socket, and over this is spread a red cloth or a black cloth embroidered in red. The women thus appear to have two horns on their head.

301 Silver jewelry, neckbands, bracelets and ear pendants are worn by the Khao Yaos.